

LDER AGM minutes

27 October 2020

1. Present / Apologies

- a. Present: Denis Mollison (Chair); Penny Goodman, Richard Lawrie, Crispin Allard, Peter Hirst, Helen Parker, Keith Sharp, Paul Tyler, Kathrine Santos, Joe Styles, Jeanie Falconer, Ruth Coleman-Taylor, Mick Taylor, Suzanne, Jonathan, Richard, Jane Graham Reed, Gay Fancourt, Lawrie Smithson, Helen Belcher, David Walker, Tim Knight, Jonathan Fryer, Wiebke Rueterjans, Anna Beria, David Warren, Sarah Lewis, Lisa French, Andrew Patrick, Hazel Fell-Rayner, Jane Carne, Sue Kendrick, Alistair Fernie.
- b. Apologies: Jennie Rigg.

The meeting opened with a talk from Paul Tyler, Spokesperson for reform in the Lords. Paul stressed the importance of stressing that FPTP cheats the voter, and the need for working with cross-party organisations to achieve it. He then took questions from members.

2. Minutes of the AGM of 17 Sept 2019:

- a. Accuracy
The accuracy of the previous year's minutes was confirmed. Proposer: Richard.
Seconder: Crispin.
- b. Matters arising
There were no matters arising not otherwise on the agenda.

3. Reports

a. Chair

Denis as chair reviewed the year in Liberal Democrats for Electoral Reform. We had planned to put an amendment to a motion and run a fringe event at the March conference, which was unfortunately cancelled.

However, progress has been good in Wales, where Denis had contributed to the review of elections to the Senedd. The committee in charge of the review had proposed a change to STV for Senedd elections. This has come from a Labour government. Local councils in Wales have the opportunity to opt in to STV, though those which most need to do this are unlikely to take it.

We ran a stall and had a very successful fringe event attended by around 200 people at the Virtual Conference in October.

b. Membership Secretary

Helen gave a report as our acting membership secretary. She explained the difference between the c. 1000 people who subscribe to our mailing list and the c. 100 who are paid members. We would be interested in encouraging more supporters to become paid members.

c. Treasurer

Richard reported that we had 104 members on 10 October. We have total assets of just over £2500. Our income this year had been £1165.21 and our outgoings had been £1181.91. We had lost some money due to the cancellation of our Novotel booking for March conference. The Virtual Conference cost a total of £536.

4. Annual Accounts

- a. To consider and approve the annual accounts for 2019-20.

These had been circulated by Richard. Denis proposed that we accept them and Sarah seconded. This was approved.

5. Membership fee

- a. To set the annual membership fee at £10 and the concessionary fee at £5 for the year commencing 1 October 2019.

Denis proposed this and Keith seconded. This was agreed.

6. Election of Officers and Executive Committee Members

Denis opened this item by, on behalf of LDER, thanking Penny Goodman who is standing down as Secretary for all her work, picking out as example her eloquent and almost instantaneous Minutes (of which this (other than this sentence) is sadly the last example).

- a. Chair

Proposer: Keith. Seconder: Penny. Denis Mollison was elected.

- b. Secretary

Proposer: Denis. Seconder: Helen. Keith Sharp was elected.

- c. Treasurer

Proposer: Denis. Seconder: Keith. Richard Lawrie was elected.

- d. Membership Secretary

Proposer: Denis. Seconder: Crispin. Helen Parker was elected.

- e. Up to five Ordinary Members of the committee

Four existing Ordinary Members were all happy to be re-elected: Peter Hirst, Sarah Lewis, Crispin Allard, and Kathrine Santos. Hazel Fell-Rayner was additionally nominated. Proposer: Denis. Seconder: Keith.

7. Appointment of Examiner

- a. To appoint an Examiner of the accounts for 2019-20.

An accountant had not been identified at the time of the meeting. It was agreed for the exec to pick this up after the AGM.

8. Motion to AGM, submitted by the LDER exec 2019/20

This motion was intended to broaden the remit of LDER beyond the matter of pure electoral systems. It replaces the word 'electoral' with 'democratic' in the 3rd and 4th clauses of our Objectives as the simplest possible way of signalling this.

Proposer: Crispin. Seconder: Denis. The motion was passed.

9. Constitutional amendments, proposed by Peter Hirst and seconded by Crispin Allard

This motion was designed to allow members to submit policy motions to the LDER AGM, and to allow emergency motions on issues which arise after the standard deadline.

Proposer: Peter. Seconder: Denis. The motion was passed.

10. Discussion

David Warren, a new member, noted that he had been impressed with what LDER do. He followed up on the issue of engaging with Trade Unions, which had come up in the discussion with Paul Tyler and which he has been involved with throughout his career. He felt that this was a very important route for engaging people and helping them to see the relevance of electoral reform. There are many Unions which don't vote for or affiliate with Labour, so there are opportunities here, both for electoral reform and for the Lib Dems more generally. Denis noted that there is a Trade Unions group within the Lib Dems, ALDTU. Keith shared with David the contact details of their chair, Kathy Grant. Lisa noted that the politicsforthemany.co.uk website reports on the TU case for electoral reform.

Denis noted that the party is conducting a review of AOs and SAOs. We will report on the recommendations for this, which are due to come in about a month, in our next newsletter. Many AOs and SAOs feel party engagement with them is poor, and we wish to use the framework of the review to push for better ways of working with the party. We are pushing for being able to put motions to conference in our own right, in the same way as SAOs currently can.

Jane Carne, also a new member, based in Canterbury, said she liked the LDER website and found the materials there very informative. She wants to work with her local party to share information about electoral reform with their members and with local voters, as Hazel Fell-Rayner has reported doing within MVM Lewes. Keith noted there was a case for forming a small working group to develop really good campaigning material for use by local parties. He has also discussed it with Sarah; David Warren indicated interest too. Jane is an ex-teacher, so has expertise in communicating and explaining concepts effectively. David felt one of the best arguments would be to highlight the fact that there are no safe seats to hide in under STV – the electorate can vote people out.

There was general agreement that proportional voting systems are not actually particularly difficult for voters to understand, and indeed that FPTP is not easy to understand. Voters have to know their local political landscape and the tactical choices available to them to use it effectively and not waste their vote or contribute to an outcome which they did not actually want.

Hazel Fell-Rayner noted that it is important to show voters that parties can work together, for example through organisations like MVM, as this will address the common criticism that coalitions cannot be effective.

Jeanie Falconer noted that the Brexit Referendum had revealed the negative consequences of a culture of people feeling they can cast protest votes which don't really matter.

Denis encouraged those who want to take issues forward via email to contact info@lder.org.

Keith noted that Kathrine Santos has suggested holding Zoom-based LDER general meetings a bit more regularly and asked members their view. This was well received. Denis felt we should ideally have a guest speaker or a specific topic for discussion. Keith suggested Alistair Carmichael, who had initially been invited for the AGM but had had to pass the role over to Paul Tyler due to other commitments.

Denis and Keith both also noted how good and engaged Wendy Chamberlain's contributions on electoral reform had been during her time as spokesperson.

Several members shared contact details with one another in the chat. David Walker said that he had copied and pasted the entire chat into a Word document and would send this to inf@lder.org.